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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MOPS MASS LI NI ECOWAS
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PLANNING FOR LIBERIA

REF: A. STATE 213493
B. ABUJA 1283

CLASSIFIED BY CDA DAWN LIBERI; REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) According to current GON planning, the 19th Motorized Infantry battalion (i.e. NIBATT 15 in UNAMSIL) and the 26th Infantry battalion from Sokoto will deploy to Monrovia. Combined manpower of the two battalions is 1,375 men. The GON had indicated a willingness to deploy OFR-trained NIBATT 14 from Sierra Leone to Liberia based on our request; however, apparently UNAMSIL has opposed the redeployment of NIBATT 14 to Liberia.

¶2. (C) DATT discussed the Liberia deployment with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) LTG Agwai July 29 (REF B). The COAS could not give a definitive date for the Nigerian deployment as their planning has not been finalized and much of it is dependent on external factors such as provision of logistical support and lift from prospective international donors. However, the COAS seemed less committed to the Nigerian general staff's previous endorsement of a "backward planning sequence" which would make Nigerian deployment dependent on a reliable timetable for the follow-on deployments from fellow ECOWAS states.

¶3. (C) The COAS said the Nigerians would not need uniforms, personnel equipment, basic medical support, field kitchens or weapons. He said the GON would be able to find enough soft-skinned vehicles for the Sokoto battalion; he did not know the status of NIBATT 15's vehicles. He also said the Sokoto battalion would deploy with minimal basic load of ammunition, and would need resupply quickly once in Liberia. The Sokoto battalion is at 90% personnel readiness and could deploy as soon as equipment and transport issues have been resolved. Finally, Agwai said the GON could provide 24-30 Warsaw Pact infantry fighting vehicles (BMPs) for Liberia but needed assistance with transport and ammunition.

¶4. (C) The COAS said the Nigerian battalions would require further donor support in the way of attack helicopters, at least one transport helicopter for the Force Commander (Nigerian BG Okwonko), logistics support to include ammunition resupply in Liberia, communications, air and sea lift for the battalion and armored personnel carriers, ammunition for the APCs and barrier material.

¶5. (C) Post has been unable to raise pertinent reftel points with ECOWAS Executive Secretary Chambas or MG Diarra due to their prolonged absence from Abuja and presence in Accra. Post would suggest that Embassy Accra also attempt to raise these points with Chambas and/or Diarra if possible. Post will continue to press ECOWAS and the GON for a quick deployment and will report further as more information becomes available.

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